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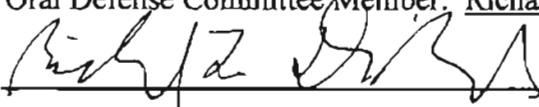
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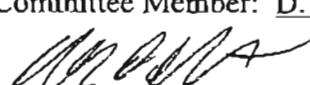
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The Roman Empire - The Third Century Crisis and Crisis Management

by

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PREFACE

The decision to conduct research and write on this particular topic is directly attributable to my appreciation for ancient Rome and the guidance of my MMS mentor and faculty advisor, Dr. Richard DiNardo. I would like to acknowledge the following organizations, institutions and individuals for their assistance and guidance:

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Executive Summary

Title: The Roman Empire – Third Century Crisis and Crisis Management

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Thesis: The tumultuous period within the Roman Empire, known as the ‘Crisis of Third Century’ was an ancient example of Crisis Management and the empire that emerged was dramatically changed as a result.

Discussion: The Roman Empire suffered through an extended period of uncertainty, transformation and change beginning in the third century and lasting well into the reign of Constantine the Great.

Historians have ardently contested the ‘crisis’ period and it continues to be a topic of intense historical scrutiny and interpretation. However, the Roman Empire did in fact suffer through an extended period of crisis and the empire that emerged following its conclusion was significantly transformed as a result. Additionally, the changes that occurred, and the reforms that were implemented, most notably under the emperors Diocletian and Constantine, were ancient examples of crisis management.

The most notable, and primary causes of the crisis are directly attributable to the problems with imperial succession, as well as the control and loyalty of Rome’s legions.

Conclusion: The reforms implemented by the Principate, culminating under the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, undoubtedly saved and transformed an empire in turmoil. Additionally, the changes that occurred were imperial examples of the modern day Crisis Management model.

Introduction

The Roman Empire suffered through an extended period of uncertainty, transformation and change beginning in the third century and lasting well into the reign of Constantine. As John Nicols describes in *Mapping the Crisis of the Third Century*, the Greek philosopher Protagoras may have regarded the crisis of the third century as such, “I have no means of knowing whether there was one or not, or of what sort of crisis it may have been. Many things prevent knowledge including the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life.”¹

Historians have ardently contested the ‘crisis’ period and it continues to be a topic of intense historical scrutiny and interpretation. This paper will argue the fact that the Roman Empire did in fact suffer through an extended period of crisis and the empire that emerged following its conclusion was significantly transformed as a result. Additionally, the changes that occurred, and the reforms that were implemented, most notably under the emperors Diocletian and Constantine, were ancient examples of crisis management.

The two problems that serve as leading contributors to the crisis were the inherent difficulties with imperial succession as well as control of the imperial and frontier legions. The emperors Diocletian and Constantine, and to a lesser extent their predecessors, confronted these issues in a concerted attempt to address and alleviate the underlying problems of the crisis. The results of these changes, and the measures implemented, ensured that the Roman Empire bore only a superficial resemblance to the imperium prior to the crisis.²

As noted before, the academic community is hardly united in defining the problems that plagued the Roman Empire throughout the third century. Most scholars do concur that the empire struggled through a period of ‘change’ or ‘transformation.’ The academic disagreement resides in using the term ‘crisis’ to define these transformative events.

Defining ‘Crisis’

The word ‘crisis’ is derived from Greek its origins to mean a ‘judgment’ or ‘decision;’ essentially a decisive moment that determines the further positive or negative development of a thing or situation.³ Modern definitions describe it as a “stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events, for better or worse, is determined; essentially a turning point.”⁴

Lukas de Blois, chairman of the international network *Impact of Empire*, describes a crisis in which the central notion of problems are “deeper, more complex and many sided” and they “could result in changes in lifestyles and social structures (that) could threaten the continuity of the Roman system.”⁵ As the term is applied in regards to history, at least since 1780, a ‘crisis’ is “an expression of a new sense of time which both indicated and intensified the end of an epoch.”⁶

The period in which we can frame the crisis is also debatable. Generally speaking, most historians identify the crisis period as having occurred over approximately fifty years, between the reigns of Alexander Severus (r. 222 – 235) and Diocletian (r. 284 – 305).⁷ The Russian historian Michael Rostovtzeff and author Edward Gibbons also attribute the third century crisis to the abrupt end of Alexander Severus’s reign and the conclusion of the Severan dynasty in 235 CE. For the purposes of this paper and the argument that the crisis’s foundations were born as a result of imperial succession and control of the imperial legions, we will commence the crisis period with Alexander Severus’s assassination and end with the reign of Constantine.

Crisis Management

Crisis Management is a fairly recent term used to describe the process in which an organization deals with a major event or set of circumstances that if not dealt with accordingly,

may have dire and transformative consequences. The use of the term ‘Crisis Management’ in its current and understood definition was first attributed to John F. Kennedy as an expression coined during the Cuban Missile Crisis to describe the management of a serious, emergency situation.⁸

The term, though historically new, can still be applied to the Roman emperors of the third century and their attempts to deal with the extraordinary circumstances in which they found themselves and the empire. Srdan Milasinovic in his dissertation, *Crisis and Crisis Management – A Contribution to a Conceptual and Terminological Delimitation*, describes the historical context of crisis management “as a function, that is, the activities of crisis management are older than the term itself.”⁹

It is disingenuous of modern day academics to argue that the Principate failed to acknowledge or recognize the on-going crisis or attempt to fix the multitude of problems. The lack of imperial continuity, hence a concise and successive plan, should not negate the fact that each emperor dealt with the crisis in the context of dealing with the problems at large. Reinhart Koselleck, the author of ‘*Crisis*’ in the Journal of the History of Ideas notes that when a crisis is identified, it is understandable that those with the ability, will attempt to manage it. Essentially, diagnosing a crisis or problem “becomes a formula for legitimating action.”¹⁰

Crisis Management Model

Crisis management action can be categorized into two time frame solutions, the immediate and the long term. Short term crisis management involves, for example, a response to a terrorist attack or catastrophic event or near terms answer to a short term question. Long term solutions surround events such as global warming or the spread of a contagion,¹¹ answers and responses that occur over an extended period of time. Uriel Rosenthal, author of *Crisis Management and Decision Making*, describes three distinct phases of a crisis; prevention and

preparation, management of the actual emergency situation and mitigation of the consequences. If we are to look at the Roman Empire during the third century, and the challenges they faced, it is not difficult to assign near and long-term solution periods to Rosenthal's crisis management model:

1. Prevention and Preparation – Alexander Severus to Diocletian
2. Management of the Emergency – Diocletian
3. Mitigation of Consequences and Recovery – Constantine

Rome in the Third Century

In order to understand the fundamental causes of the crisis, it is important to appreciate the environment in which it was created. The Roman territorial expansion that began under the expansion provisions of the first emperor Augustus (r. 27 BCE – 14 CE), reached its zenith during Trajan's (r. 98 – 117 CE) reign in 117 CE.

By the middle of the third century, the empire had expanded as far north as Britain and the Rhine, the northern coast of Africa in the south and as far west as modern day Syria and Iraq.¹² The increase in territory also dramatically increased the bureaucratic costs, size and composition of Rome's imperial legions. Prolonged conflicts, difficulties in maintaining expansive borders and combat losses made it extremely hard to maintain legionary composition and loyalty.

In order to compensate for this, Rome began to rely upon the provinces to replenish and recoup lost manpower. This also led to unintended consequences. The allegiances of the empire's soldiers, once wholly Rome's, was now divided. Each province that fielded an army

also engendered local beliefs, customs, rituals and ultimately loyalty. The days of Rome ‘proper’ feeling the consequences of legionary actions, both good and bad, had effectively come to an end. Essentially, Rome was employing mercenary organizations and individuals to maintain its interests within the regions, a doctrine not suited to a homogenous strategy.

Following the death of Alexander Severus in 235 at the hands of his ‘loyal’ legions, Rome entered a new phase of difficulties concerning imperial succession and legionary allegiance. Rome suffered considerably through an extended period of ‘emperor making’ instead of ‘empire defending,’ with a majority of the would-be emperors dying from *other* than natural causes.¹³ Legions loyal to a particular individual, regardless of the will of the imperial senate or the sitting emperor, could nominate an individual as a presumptive emperor.

From the time of Severus to Diocletian, there were no less than 32 would-be emperors vying for the purple. This period in the empire has essentially been characterized as ‘military anarchy.’¹⁴ Edward Luttwak, author *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, described this period of contested succession as occurring “by murder and civil war.”¹⁵

The importance and reliance of the Roman legions to the security and viability of the empire cannot be overstated. Even prior to the understood beginning of the crisis period, Septimius Severus (r. 193 – 211 CE) gave prescient advice to his sons in 211, “work together, enrich the soldiers, and scorn everyone else.”¹⁶ Luttwak also describes the collapse of central authority, and thus control of the legions, as nearly destroying the “entire conception of empire.”¹⁷

By the middle of the third century, the crisis had reached its military apex. The ‘barracks emperors’, suffering from incessant internal bickering and infighting, consistently failed to maintain Rome’s borders and centralized interests. The Goths and Alamanni threatened the

Danube, the Franks penetrated the Rhine, the Herulians sacked Athens and the Saxons invaded Britain. The east was no less problematic with a renewed Sassanid threat and the ever present potential for a two front war imminent.

Each of the emperors following Severus's assassination was confronted with a multitude of problems and difficulties that fundamentally shook the very foundations of the empire. The very real possibility of losing collective control of the legions, thus safety and security of the empire, was a crisis of major and realized proportion.

The Principate and the Crisis

If we are to make a correlation between the management of the crisis and the respective emperors, it is easy to begin with the reign of Gallienus from 253 to 268 CE. His main concern was the affairs of the army. In order to quell internal dissention or regain and control lost territories, Gallienus needed a reliable, loyal and capable army.

Gallienus expanded upon the reforms begun by Alexander Severus and Hadrian (r. 117 – 138 CE). The prestige of the army was increased amongst the citizens of the empire as well as the social prospects of individual soldiers. Along with the obligatory increases in pay and benefits, soldiers were afforded the opportunity to climb the social ladder through distinguished service. This standing in elevation was also a two-edged sword. Along with the increase in status, soldiers now believed their influence and decision making ability extended beyond the battlefield. Legions began to view their capabilities also abridged politics, an unintended consequence of attempting to fix legionary problems.

In order to garner legion support, common soldiers were allowed to progress through the ranks, becoming junior officers and eventually ascending into the Equestrian Order if their skills and abilities allowed it. Pat Southern describes this social mobility as an ancient version of

Napoleons *grognards* and a “marshal’s baton in (every) knapsack.”¹⁸ Additionally, Gallienus placed personnel of loyal standing in charge of provinces with large and potentially emperor threatening armies. These individuals, mostly from the Equestrian Order, were given additional titles and status as a way of preventing the spontaneous uprising from protectorate armies and thus removing sitting emperors.

Problems arose with Gallienus’ handling of finances, a key necessity and component for maintaining the empires legions. The empire suffered as a result of silver degradation in their coinage, leaving little value and inflating prices across the empire. Gallienus’ money problems did not manifest themselves until after his death, but his mishandling of the empires finances was a crisis management failure and subverts the attempts at ‘paying off the army.’ This is in standing with the notoriously historical problems emperors and the senate struggled with in fashioning lasting change and initiatives. Short term solutions, for immediate and personal gains negated any attempt at long term and viable crisis solutions.

Rome’s Emperors consistently failed to see beyond the immediate and forge long term objectives or goals. As long as the empire was functioning as the *current* emperor desired, at the immediate moment, then long term solutions were an afterthought. The changes Gallienus affected within the army, in particular the increase in pay with a flawed currency did not go unchallenged.

Pat Southern, author of *The Roman Empire: from Severus to Constantine*, expressed it best describing the disparity between the soldiers and the populace, “the blatant favoritism shown to the army was not seen for what it was, the way to salvation (and an answer to the ongoing crisis itself), but an unnecessary drain of money from all quarters.” Problems with

currency devaluation were a problem that extended throughout the crisis period until the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine.

During the reign of Aurelian (r. 270 – 275) the empire began to see its first glimpses of the totalitarian power that would become the hallmark of later emperors, particularly Constantine. Lucius Aurelian seized the purple after the assassination of Gallienus and following the brief reign of Claudius Gothicus (r. 268 – 270). Aurelian was a soldier-emperor, hoisted onto the throne at the direction and behest of his soldiers. His initiatives were heavily focused on reforming the currency, taxation of the wealthy and consolidating power. Aurelian was also concerned with the ever present possibility of barbarian invasions.

In 271, Aurelian built a series of walls and fortifications around Rome that spanned nearly 12 miles in the hopes of holding back barbarian raiders, imagined or otherwise. Rome's Aurelian walls were also “a sign of changed times,” characterized by increasing levels of insecurity deep within imperial territories.¹⁹ The perceived threat may have been publicly focused outward, or the walls may have represented a hedge against internal strife and insurrection. This was an understandable precaution considering the tumultuous ‘under new management’ doctrine shared by so many of Aurelian’s predecessors.

During Aurelian’s reign the empire begins to see the glimpses of the imperial consolidation of power and self prescribed divinity that would become all too familiar under Constantine’s reign. Aurelian’s accomplishments regarding the crisis he inherited from his predecessors allowed him to mold the purple and project the office of the emperor as majestic, invincible and immortal. His reign signified that an emperor must transcend the office in order to be the “general, politician, statesman, psychologist, performer, and god.”²⁰

Aurelian suffered the same fate as so many of the previous emperors, once again highlighting Rome's problems with succession. Following a decision to march against Persia, Aurelian was assassinated at the hands of his own generals. Aurelian's reign however does mark a turning point in the crisis. Many of the reforms he instituted marked a significant shift in how Rome conducted business during the tumultuous years of the third century.

Aurelian however, failed to identify an heir, genetic or adopted, and his death began a period of uncertainty within Rome. At the behest of the Senate, and not necessarily with the approval of the armies, the former senator Tacitus was put forward as the new emperor. His reign was remarkably short, six months at the most and his reign was followed by a contentious period between the former Praetorian Prefect Florian (r. a matter of months) and Probus (r. 276 – 282 CE).

Ultimately, in a lop-sided contest, Probus managed to wait out his opponent and let Roman soldier enthusiasm for emperor-making take its course. Florian was killed by his own troops before a single battle was even fought. Once again, the overarching and on-going crisis of succession would surmount the needs, or the will, of the empire.

Probus fared no better than his predecessors, after putting down several challenges and usurpers to the throne; he too was assassinated by his own soldiers leaving no imperial heir. Instead, the army commanded by Carus (r. 282 – 283 CE) put him forth as their choice to succeed Probus. Carus imparted the title of Augusti upon his two sons Carinus and Numerianis. Each of the Augusti were placed in the east and west respectively, a precursor to decisions in partitioning the empire that would mark an eventual divide between the eastern and western hemispheres of the empire.

Carus in turn, along with his son Numerianus, was likely assassinated by his Praetorian Prefect, Lucius Aper. What makes this notable is the individual that assisted Aper, was none other than Diocles, also known as Diocletian.

Diocletian and Imperial Reforms

Diocletian was proclaimed Augustus on 20 November 284, marking the beginning of the end of the third century crisis and the culmination of reforms that would eventually be completed under the reign of Constantine. Diocletian's most notable reforms were the problems inherent with succession and the capabilities of Rome's legions. What makes Diocletian's reign extremely remarkable is the potential his reforms would have left, had his successors adhered to the formula Diocletian championed. Additionally, Diocletian's empirical transformations appear to be the first collaborative and well-intentioned efforts for long term solutions to the empire's problems.

As we have discussed, the two most significant problems that comprised the crisis of the third century was the threat of invasion (hence the Roman army) and the succession of power. Diocletian recognized, and was an active observer in the problems that plagued the empire. Most notable was the unwieldy size of the empire and the bureaucracy that supported it. Unless the empire was to reduce its size, an unlikely proposition, then the empire would need more active and equally powerful participants to assist in its governance and administration.

Attempts at power sharing were ventured as far back as Antoninus and Augustus. In the second century era, Marcus Aurelius shared power with Lucius Verus and eventually his son Commodus. The Severans followed suit and Carus made an ill-fated attempt to do the same.

There were additional problems with succession when an emperor did not have an heir waiting in the wings. Sitting emperors overcame this problem by adopting loyal followers or

individuals whose families carried wealth and prestige within Rome. Caesar's adoption of Octavian at the outset of the empire is a prime example of this. Beyond the aforementioned emperors who attempted to establish a line of succession during the third century, the multitude of would-be emperors had little time or inclination to do the same.

One of Diocletian's first acts as emperor was to appoint his fellow soldier Marcus Maximian as his Caesar, or as some historians have contested, Augustus at the outset of Diocletian's reign. This decision may have been twofold. In one area it satisfied the army's unending desire to see a soldier-emperor on the throne, as well as splitting the difficulties of governorship amongst two people. Additionally, coregency was an attempt to solve the problems inherent with local allegiances and misguided loyalties.

Diocletian would administer control of the empire in the east and Maximian would take charge in the west. Diocletian's decision to include Maximian as co-emperor also precluded the possibility of a renewed civil war. The two emperors also introduced a trend that would continue under Constantine, divine separation of the rulers from the people. This was also the beginning of what would eventually form the backbone of the first Tetrarchy or 'the leadership of four.'

From 284 to 291, the combined efforts of Diocletian and Maximian had profound effects on the stability of the empire. The Sassanid threat in the east was mitigated through treaties and Roman consolidation of territory. The Mesopotamian territories were reabsorbed, Syria reorganized and Roman backed candidates were placed on the thrones of Armenia and Tiridates.²¹

The west was more difficult to contain yet both emperors managed to quell the discontent along the Danube with only a minor annoyance gestating in Britain. One of the more notable outcomes during the first seven years of Diocletian's reign was the minimization of Rome as the

seat of imperial power. Diocletian only visited Rome only once during his reign. The effectiveness of Rome proper had been supplanted by the movements, and location of the sitting emperor. Tacitus describes the ‘secret of empire’ as residing in the ability to make an emperor in a place other than Rome.²²

As briefly mentioned before, administrative control of the empire was daunting to say the least. Diocletian responded by forming what would eventually become the Tetrarchy, or the division of the empire into four separately administered provinces, each ruled by an Augustus (the first) or Caesar (the second). It is unknown if this was a carefully crafted arrangement that Diocletian planned from the start of his reign, or an answer to infighting and potential rivals; “if Diocletian was at the mercy of squabbling subordinates at least he came up with a solution that at one and the same time provided generals to attend to the different parts of the empire, and also provide successors.”²³

In 293, Diocletian elevated two individuals to the ranks of Caesar, Constantius and Galerius. Galerius was shepherded by Diocletian, and Maximian took Constantius under his wing. The tetrarchy was a viable solution to the problems of administration and succession; however it did have its drawbacks. The success of the Tetrarchic system resided on the willingness of its benefactors to comply with the principle. Diocletian was the acknowledged senior amongst the tetrarchy and its main proponent and advocate.

The tetrarchy was able to survive as long as Diocletian was in charge, following his retirement, the personalities and ambitions of his fellow Augusti ultimately led to its collapse. Even though the tetrarchy was a failure in execution, the concept was the first true attempt by an emperor to apply imperial management to the succession emergency. Diocletian attempted to

apply a long term solution to a problem that dogged the empire since the reign of the first emperor Augustus.

Another leading cause of the third century crisis was the army's ability to nominate and promote an individual in their ranks to the principate. Diocletian was keenly aware of the military's ability to make or break emperors; he was a beneficiary of this process. In order to maintain the strength of the army, yet limit or prevent its ability to nominate an individual, Diocletian dispersed the homogeneous local armies and restructured their commands.

Diocletian is credited with expanding the army but also limiting its *organic* composition. Legions of the past may have consisted of 5 to 6 thousand men; under Diocletian this may have been limited to only one thousand. Older legions were broken down and dispersed, though still maintaining their original strength. It is difficult to determine if Diocletian split the older, larger provinces into subparts as a precaution to insurrection. However, Diocletian did make the transition and split the empire into as many as 92 separately governed provinces.

The smaller areas allowed their respective governors to address local issues on a more personal level vice the needs of larger and more dynamic provinces. Smaller armies also meant a more limited possibility of insurrection. Additionally, as Jakub Grygiel argued in *The Barbarian State and Decentralization*, a smaller army was also better equipped to respond to border incursions and wasn't encumbered by the enormous logistical footprint reminiscent of the large imperial legions of the past.

The Tetrarchy and its principles did not last long following Diocletian and Maximian's relinquishment of the purple (a first for a sitting emperor). After a period of illness, the ailing Diocletian convinced Maximian to step down and the two Augusti ceded power to their

successors Constantius and Galerius in 305. This succession also marks the first willing abdication and bloodless transfer of power to the next imperial line in the history of the empire.

However, personal ambition and disharmony amongst Diocletian's successors threatened to embroil the empire in civil war once again. Without Diocletian as the main advocate of an orderly and understood succession, the problems of the principate would again threaten the stability of the empire. Following the death of Constantius, an Augusti under Galerius, Constantine was thrust forward by his troops as the next Augustus to succeed his father.

The seeds of a renewed power struggle, hence a civil war, were on the horizon. Diocletian's reforms, though tremendous in their potential for eradicating the problems with succession and control of the imperial legions, failed to account for personal ambition. The crisis, and its management, would continue under his successors.

Constantine and Consolidating Power

The logic behind not declaring an end to the third century crisis following Diocletian and Maximians abdication are the problems and difficulties the empire continued to deal with regarding succession. By 312, four claimants to the principate remained, the last actors of the crumbling tetrarchy. In 312, Constantine marched on Rome to remove Maxentius, son of Maximian, and reclaim the peninsula. The most significant outcome of the Battle of the Milvan Bridge between Maxentius and Constantine wasn't necessarily Constantine's victory, it was the introduction of Christianity into the sphere of the purple.

As previously discussed, a significant problem with succession was the lack of authority behind an individual's right to rule, heavenly or otherwise. The barracks emperors of the third century were not thrust forward as would-be emperors in the belief that they shared divinity or affiliation with the Gods, though many tried that tactic. Diocletian himself had styled his

heritage after Jupiter, and Maximian took the lineage of Hercules as examples. Constantine likely recognized the importance of a new and emerging religion as a way in which to legitimize and popularize his right to rule.

Regardless if Constantine truly believed in the Chi-Rho symbol emblazoned on his shield and standard, its significance had profound effects in the way Constantine legitimized the principate and his transition to an absolute monarchy. Later in his rule, Constantine repeatedly stated that “his rule was sanctioned by divine favor” and that he was chosen to govern the empire “just as bishops were chosen to shepherd their congregations.”²⁴ Constantine’s application of religion, and the divine right to rule, had significant repercussions during his reign as well as his successors.

In 324, Constantine had eliminated the last remaining contender to the throne, and after nearly thirty nine years, the empire had a sole ruler. Constantine was now free to implement and continue the crisis reforms begun under Diocletian and end the crisis.

Regarding one of the main components of the crisis, succession, Constantine did flirt with the idea of continuing the concept of the tetrarchy under the auspices of his two sons, Crispus and Constantine II. This attempt at continuing a Diocletian idea was convoluted and tempered with the overbearing presence of Constantine. Crispus was executed by his own father and Constantine II was eventually killed in a civil war with his brother Constans. At one point, Constantine did manage to share the purple amongst as many as four relatives, including his nephew, Dalmatius.

The elevation of relatives was reminiscent of previous rulers that also made the attempt, a concept that had eluded Diocletian only in the fact that he had no family that could ascend to the emperorship. Unfortunately, imperial succession would not reach a concise solution during

Constantine's reign. Following his death in 337, a purge would follow that eliminated Dalmatius and a host of other descendants from Constantine's second wife. In the end, Constantine II ascended the throne only to be usurped by Constans. The possibilities of a bloodless change of power and a legacy of harmony that was forged under Diocletian ended with Constantine's death.

Constantine continued to apply the Diocletian practice of separating military command from civilians and the removal of senators from the armies.²⁵ Arthur Ferrill, author of the *Fall of the Roman Empire*, also suggests that the reforms Constantine implemented were less militaristic necessity than political reality. The changes in the military's structure "was that the new governors and generals, reduced in power, were less likely to lead rebellions." Constantine also abolished the previous king-makers, the Praetorian Guard after they made their last coup attempt with Maxentius. Instead, Constantine recruited his own personal body guards from Germanic troops and in an ironic twist, the Praetorian Prefect eventually became the senior civilian office within the empire.²⁶

Gibbon however, would argue that the decisions Constantine made regarding the military was the path that led to the empire's downfall: "The memory of Constantine has been deservedly censured for another innovation, which corrupted military discipline and prepared the ruin of the empire. Though succeeding princes labored to restore the strength and numbers of the frontier garrisons, the empire, till the last moment of its dissolution, continued to languish under the mortal wound which had been so rashly or so weakly inflicted by the hand of Constantine."²⁷

Gibbons critiques of Constantine are notably harsh and have been contested in contemporary times. Constantine reorganized the military away from the traditional defensive

orientation that had been in place since the early Republican period and expanded upon Diocletian's ideas. Instead, Constantine opted for a large mobile field army of approximately 100,000 or more, stationed centrally within the empire and drawn from frontier forces. This is not to say that Constantine abandoned the borders in favor of a centralized, mobile force. Constantine still maintained outposts and garrisons throughout the frontiers; essentially he developed a defense-in-depth doctrine.

The idea was that the empire's borders were so expansive and porous, that it would be nearly impossible to maintain a large, stationary garrison to protect it all of it. Constantine's mobile force of cavalry and infantry would serve at the ready, able to move quickly in response to any incursions on the frontier. It also precluded the possibility of a field general challenging the emperor, as well as endearing the soldiers less to their commander than the emperor himself. The major change between centuries of 'Maginot line' mentality was removing the stagnant forces along the border in order to provide quick military reaction throughout the empire.

Crisis management, as previously discussed, can either be a response to an immediate event, or an action that requires a long term solution. This paper has argued that the focus of the *legitimate* emperors from Severus to Alexander has been imperial succession and control of the imperial legions, thus a long term solution. However, another event that occurred during Constantine's reign may be just as important regarding the final phase and short term solution of the crisis management model, mitigating the consequences and recovery.

The Roman Empire suffered through years of bitter upheaval, contested succession, barbarian invasions, devalued currency and host of other calamities. The empire that emerged from this extended period of unrest was large, cumbersome and too difficult to be ruled by one emperor located in a city that was no longer the center, or heart of the empire.

Diocletian's reorganization of provincial government put an end to the special position that Italy held for so long. The peninsula was broken down into provinces and subjected to taxation. The administration of all provinces, and the armies fielded there, were placed completely under imperial control. Constantine furthered this by splitting the empire into prefectures with each consisting of several dioceses, all controlled and administered to by the emperor. Military affairs, once the domain of the provincial governors, were now placed under the control of the *dux*, or leader. Civil administration was the only responsibility Constantine afforded the governor's. As noted before, Diocletian and Constantine also removed the ever-present threat of the Praetorian Guard and its Prefect. Protection of the emperor was no longer a Praetorian right, or responsibility.

In 330 CE, the former city of Byzantium was consecrated as Constantinople, the new capital of Rome and the seat of the first Christian emperor. The importance of this event, seen in the full historical context of the empire and the crisis, cannot be overstated.

The ancient Greek city of Byzantium appeared to be the ideal city to house the remnants of an empire that emerged from a prolonged crisis. John Drinkwater in '*The Principate – Life belt or Millstone around the neck of the Empire?*' describes Constantine's decisions accordingly. "Only by fully renouncing Rome and her traditions could Constantine throw off the millstone of the Principate, and so finally put an end to the third century crisis."²⁸

Byzantium served several purposes that Rome could no longer offer. It straddled the important Bosphorus Straits and control of the Hellespont, a vital sea route for trade, commerce and communication between the Mediterranean, Aegean and the Black Seas. Byzantium was also at the crossroads between the Greek/Middle Eastern and Latin worlds, the dominant area between the inflows of provincial currency.

Ancient records and archaeological evidence point to the fact that the viability of the empire, at least economically, was no longer in the western portion of the empire. Constantine's decision to seat the power of the empire in Constantinople is hard to dispute considering the fact that the eastern portion of the empire endured for another one thousand years after the collapse of Rome. The final answer to the third century crisis was Constantinople, the last effort in putting to rest the upheaval that began in the third century.

At the conclusion of Constantine's reign, the empire was essentially stable, viable and a transformed kingdom. This transformation was the conclusion of a concerted effort by a few in the Principate. The reforms begun under Diocletian and his predecessors were designed to meet the unique challenges that had been created during the third century. Diocletian used the value of earlier institutions but introduced necessary changes that fundamentally reorganized the entire imperial system. Constantine expounded upon these crisis management initiatives. The steps taken by Diocletian and Constantine "were unmistakably directed towards strengthening imperial authority and prestige,"²⁹ and ensuring the tumultuous years of the third century were laid to rest.

Conclusion

Constantine fundamentally changed one of the most important elements of the crisis, control and administration of the legions. The emperor separated the legions into two distinct groups, led by separate generals and placed in different provinces or cities within the empire. This effectively eliminated the threat of a large and homogenous legion that had the potential to threaten the emperor.

The crisis of third century came to an end during the reign of Constantine. Over the span of nearly ninety years, numerous emperors failed and succeeded at managing the crisis that threatened to destroy the Roman Empire. The leading causes, succession and loyalty of the

imperial legions, were difficult to implement lasting and substantial change to. Not until the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine did the management of the crisis reach a conclusive end. These two emperors exercised the necessary processes and tools that modern governments and persons in leadership would recognize as crisis management. Their reforms had a lasting impact on the future of the Roman Empire, the establishment of the Byzantine dynasty and the emergence of Medieval Europe.

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